

Help Get the Word Out on Mislabeling

Key Talking Points for Column, Letters to Editor, Etc:

- Bison ranchers have worked diligently to build a strong market-based relationship based upon quality and integrity.
- In North America, the term buffalo is generally considered to describe American bison.
- Recently, imported water buffalo has been showing up in regional retail stores, labeled only as “Wild Ground Buffalo – Free Range.”
- Some retailers are switching from bison to the “Wild Ground Buffalo” because the water buffalo is about \$2/lb. less.
- This product is being processed in an FDA approved facility in the United States, but is not being handled under USDA or state-equivalent inspection. In other words, this is uninspected product.*
- This label is highly misleading and creates an extreme risk for bison producers everywhere because:
 1. Our customers—and potential customers—are being deceived into buying a product that has a distinctly different taste and quality profile than bison; and
 2. Any food safety issue arising from this product would likely only be reported as a problem with “buffalo meat,” thus leading the public to believe that there is a safety issue with bison.
- The National bison Association met with USDA and FDA on September 13, to discuss this issue. Because the product is only being processed under FDA jurisdiction, that agency won’t act unless there is a formal complaint filed.
- On September 19, the National Bison Association filed a formal complaint to stop the mislabeling of water buffalo.
- The NBA is also working with leaders in the U.S. Senate to discuss potential legislative changes to address this issue.
- People can support our effort by signing our on-line petition at:
<https://www.change.org/p/national-bison-association-label-water-buffalo-as-water-buffalo-in-north-america-not-buffalo>
- Mislabeling has been occurring in pet food for more than a year. In fact, several products in the marketplace are including water buffalo ingredients, labeled only as “buffalo.” In response to a request filed by the NBA, the American Association of Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), which developed the model regulations adopted by individual states, is working to address this mislabeling. Meanwhile, shoppers can make an informed choice by checking the ingredient label on pet food products. “Bison” means bison. “Buffalo” on the label, or the ingredient panel, means water buffalo.

* If water buffalo were processed under voluntary USDA FSIS inspection, the label would be required to identify the product as “water buffalo.” However, FDA does not require any pre-market approval for labels.

Sample message for Social Media

People have been calling our animals buffalo for more than 300 years. Now water buffalo products are sneaking into the human food, and pet food marketplace labeled only as “buffalo.” That’s clearly designed to mislead customers into thinking that they are buying bison for the families and companion animals. Don’t be fooled by this deception. And, we encourage you to join the National Bison Association’s campaign for new regulations to stop this deceptive labeling. Go to this link to sign the NBA petition for truth in labeling.

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